

Recession Proof Weddings

I have been thinking of the many conversations I have had over the years with couples who were about to get married. As a clergy person one is privileged to be party to much of the discussion that precedes a wedding, the planning, the hopes, the dreams and always too a small measure of anxiety. Lately though, the levels of anxiety have increased substantially. Unfortunately some weddings are being called off or postponed for financial reasons. Couples are feeling under pressure like never before.

During the boom years one could be a guest at a wedding and forgiven for thinking it was actually the wedding of some member of the royal family, such was the pomp. There is still a minority holding to the dream that their wedding has to be the biggest and best, but simply the money is no longer there to buy such dreams.

However couples are still falling in love, and wanting to come into church to make their vows in the company of friends and family. There is still something present within couples that leads them into God's presence to affirm their love and seek God's blessing, regardless of financial circumstances. I suspect this has always been the case, it's only in recent years that all the trappings have served to obscure the essentials of the day.

The essentials of the day are what is important. That you and your fiancé/e are getting married is the thing that is most significant, everything else pales into the background. Years afterwards it will not be the five course meal or the number of guests that will be cherished and still talked about but instead it will be your togetherness and the fact that God's presence has remained real to you throughout all the years.

That such a possibility of happiness should in any way be denied because of a credit crunch seems desperately unfair. Especially so when one considers that the essentials themselves need not actually cost that much.

- 1) The Church: A charge can not be placed on you for the use of a church. Following your wedding day you may however wish to make a donation to the church in thanksgiving for your marriage.
- 2) Flowers: If you can get married in the spring or summer there are plenty of flowers to be found in hedgerows and gardens. Have a walk one day down a country lane and see what is there for free. Also use your contacts to find someone who will allow you to have a browse through your garden with secateurs.
- 3) Flower Arrangements: Every church has within its ranks a band of flower arrangers who usually decorate the church for Sunday service. Imagine their delight if they were invited to work on your wedding day arrangements. Remember you are only in the church for an hour, so there is no need to go over the top.
- 4) Music: There is no necessity for a string quartet which could cost over €1000. The organ is there so use it. If you are insistent on something different try approaching the local brass band or silver band to play instead. I guarantee it will be only one tenth of the price of a string quartet.
- 5) Church Halls: A five star hotel, a secluded country house, or the church hall? On the face of it there might not seem much to be debated. But think of the number of times where you have been at a wedding and being marched through the courses at a pace that would make your head dizzy, then at the end have the table cloth whipped out from underneath you and for you to be ejected to make room for the band. Sometimes you just get the feeling the staff are in more of a rush to get away than help you have a perfect day. A church hall can be transformed into something unique and special where you can move things along at your own pace, where guests will be able to relax and enjoy a different atmosphere. The cost savings are huge.
- 6) Catering: (Related to the above.) Restaurants are quieter than they were even a few months back. Why not ask your favourite establishment if they could cater for your day? They may

well be interested in such a new business area. The most lovely and unique reception I was at was one where the guests were invited to bring a salad, or a desert, or some meat and a more cosmopolitan buffet you would never see.

- 7) Photography: A professional wedding photographer will charge thousands. Admittedly they will take hundreds of pictures. After your wedding is over they will ask you to choose what pictures you want, and you will then order maybe thirty or forty pictures for your album and some copies for your friends and relatives. Interestingly the photographer will retain the copyright on all the pictures. But a local photographer from one of the local newspapers has all the same equipment, their approach might not be as jaded, and importantly they will probably be amenable to giving you a disk with all the photos on it, and they will give you the freedom to produce what you want for less.

Even if only one of the ideas above is a possibility for you it could make a big saving and it may well be the thing that gives your wedding that sense of uniqueness that everyone desires but few achieve.

(Rev Bruce Hayes, member of the Marriage Council – 2009)